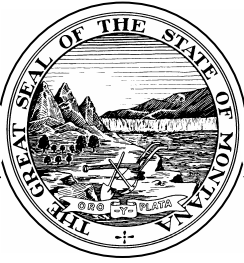


DEPARTMENT OF ADMINISTRATION
DIVISION OF BANKING AND FINANCIAL INSTITUTIONS



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NEWS RELEASE

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

December 1, 2006

PHONY LENDER "ADVANCE FEE" SCAM

- Lender Purported Fraudulent Location in Great Falls -

HELENA, MONTANA – The Montana Division of Banking and Financial Institutions today issued a consumer alert to the Montana press corps and consumers warning them about an entity identifying itself as Northbay Alliance Group or Northbay Alliance ("Northbay Alliance").

The Division of Banking and Financial Institutions has received information that an entity or person representing itself as Northbay Alliance has been targeting consumers in an "advance fee" scam. Northbay Alliance has stated to consumers that it does business at 300 Central Avenue in Great Falls, Montana. This location is a US Bank building, which has no association or knowledge of the fraudulent entity doing business as Northbay Alliance.

"Advance fee" scams entice consumers with the promise that they will be approved for a loan if they pay the lender an up-front fee. The loan never materializes and it is then that the consumer learns that the loan was just a bogus offer.

"This is apparently an attempt by a person or entity to otherwise illegally part Montanans from their money," said Annie M. Goodwin, Commissioner of the Montana Division of Banking and Financial Institutions. "Consumers should be suspicious of any lender requesting advance fees with the promise of making a loan."

Consumers have reported that Northbay Alliance operated a website at www.northbayalliancegroup.com in order for consumers to provide contact information if they were interested in obtaining a loan. After providing contact information on this website, the consumers were later called by a representative from Northbay Alliance. This representative would request that an advance fee be paid in order to obtain a loan.

Northbay Alliance does not hold any license issued by the City of Great Falls or the State of Montana. Anyone who questions the authenticity of an entity or person who represents itself as a financial institution doing business in Montana should contact the Division of Banking and Financial Institutions at (406) 841-2920.

Information about “advance fee” scams is available on the website of the Federal Trade Commission (FTC) at <http://www.ftc.gov/bcp/online/pubs/tmarkg/loans.htm>. Consumers who have been a victim of an advance fee scam CAN report it to the FTC online at www.ftc.gov or by phone at 1-877-FTC-HELP (1-877-382-4357).

The Division of Banking and Financial Institutions is the regulator for Montana state-chartered banks, state-chartered credit unions and non-depository financial institutions, which include consumer loan and sales finance companies, payday lenders, title lenders, mortgage brokers and loan originators and escrow businesses.

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